



## Legislative Testimony

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### **Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 5389, An Act Concerning Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record**

Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Ranking Members Miner and Polletta, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Anderson Curtis, and I am a field organizer for the ACLU of Connecticut Smart Justice campaign. I am here to testify in support of House Bill 5389. We strongly encourage the Committee to support this bill.

Smart Justice is led by people who are living with the collateral consequences of a criminal record daily. The conversation about this bill is a conversation about Smart Justice leaders' lives, and our families' lives.

For some Smart Justice leaders, ending discrimination based solely on someone's record is about being able to start their own businesses to support their children. Being able to have an apartment in their own names for the first time. Getting college degrees. This bill is about Tracie, Terri, Sean, Marquita, Gus, Tyran, Louis, Alex, Brian, Shelby, Donald, Curtis, AnnMarie, Eric, and Ciara. It's about the one in three Americans living with a record, and the 50% of all Americans who have a family member who was incarcerated.

This morning, legislators heard from Tim, a Smart Justice leader. Tim received a pardon from the state. But before that, when he was applying for graduate school, he had to check a box on his application to indicate that he had a record. Tim gives back to others at every turn. Despite his pardon, he has to live wondering if that check mark will hurt his school career.

We are sick and tired of living with the uncertainty of never knowing when our pasts will be held against us. We and our families, particularly in Black and Latinx communities, are literally less healthy and stable because of the barriers we face to reentering society.

Barriers to reentry are killing us. A state study found that formerly incarcerated young people in Connecticut were eight times more likely than average to die within a year of leaving prison.

We want to be treated the same as any other employee, tenant, or student – no more, and no less. This bill asks only that gatekeepers judge us based on who we are as individuals today, not on assumptions based solely on a record from our past.

Smart Justice is not alone. 82 percent of Connecticut voters agree that everyone deserves a second chance, and a person's record of arrest or conviction alone does not tell you whether they will be a good employee, neighbor, or insurance policy holder. 57% of Connecticut voters support the legislature passing a law like House Bill 5389.<sup>1</sup>

All people in Connecticut have paid the price of mass incarceration, yet we cannot afford the cost. Smart Justice strongly urges you to pass House Bill 5389, a critical bill to create thriving families and hopeful communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Benenson Strategy Group “Criminal Justice Poll 2020.” ACLU of Connecticut (Feb. 5, 2020), *available at* [https://www.acluct.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/2020-2-19\\_aclu\\_ct\\_smart\\_justice\\_polling\\_release\\_toplevel\\_clean\\_slate.pdf](https://www.acluct.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/2020-2-19_aclu_ct_smart_justice_polling_release_toplevel_clean_slate.pdf).